

The Falling Leaves

by Konstantya

Category: Escaflowne
Genre: Drama, Romance
Language: English
Characters: Eries A., Folken F.
Status: Completed
Published: 2016-04-07 22:45:14
Updated: 2016-04-07 22:45:14
Packaged: 2016-04-27 22:13:29
Rating: K+
Chapters: 1
Words: 726
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: "You forget, Lord Folken; I'm used to the capitol. One has to travel all the way to the outskirts of Palas before you see any true foliage, and even then, I daresay Asturia's country-sides don't hold a candle to Fanelia's forests. Not at this time of year, at least." (Eries visits Fanelia post-war. Based on a tumblr prompt. Slight Folken/Eries.)

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General Note: I'm only going to reformat my fics so much when this site is the one at fault. So if the formatting is weird, please check out my profile for more info. Thank you.

A/N: As stated in the summary, this was based on a prompt provided by Casa Circe: _"Autumn in Fanelia, post-war. Folken is smitten."_

Takes place in an AU where Folken doesn't die, obviously.

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****The Falling Leaves**
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"I don't think I've ever seen such colors."

Folken turned to his companion. Eries Aston had her head craned back, a hand against the top of her hat to keep it from falling off, and looked positively dazzled. The expression was so pleasantly uncharacteristic, coming from the second princess, that he couldn't help but let his gaze linger on her face for a moment. A small,

amused smile quirked about his mouth.

"Never?" he asked.

Eries didn't remove her eyes from the trees above them, but a similarly small smile came to her own lips just then. "You forget, Lord Folken; I'm used to the capitol. One has to travel all the way to the outskirts of Palas before you see any true foliage, and even then, I daresay Asturia's country-sides don't hold a candle to Fanelia's forests. Not at this time of year, at least."

Autumn was well underway, most of the leaves already having turned to reds and golds and burnished browns. In her sea-blue ensemble, she stuck out like a sore thumb, but Folken found himself strangely charmed by the visual contrast. Or maybe it was that he found himself strangely charmed by her. It was true she was an attractive womanâ€"not quite the obvious beauty that her sister was, but pretty all the sameâ€"and he'd always had some measure of respect for her, but this most recent visit had allowed him to get to know her in a way he'd never had a chance to, before.

She'd relaxed, in the wake of the war. Her father's health hadn't made a complete turnaround, but it had improved, and the younger Princess Millerna seemed to be stepping up to meet her responsibilities as heir admirably. As a consequence, the icy armor that Eries had worn when he'd come to seek asylum had since melted into something more placid, if just as practical. It was an odd shift, though not an unwelcome one, and when she'd expressed a desire to tour the royal gardensâ€"as the last time she had seen them had been over a decade agoâ€"Van hadn't even had to ask; Folken had volunteered, right on the spot. From there, they'd wandered onto the surrounding forest paths, and what had started as a leisurely way to wile away some time following the midday meal had since turned into a full afternoon's walk.

Folken wasn't complaining. And as long as Eries was happy and the light held, he wasn't about to, either.

"It isn't nearly as predictable as the leaves turningâ€"nor as pleasant to walk through, I'm sure some would argueâ€"but you should visit sometime in the winter," he said. "Sometimes you'll get a bout of rain that will freeze overnight, and the trees look like they're literally covered in glass. And if you're lucky enough to have a breeze pass through,"â€"the corners of his mouth quirked up once moreâ€"then that's really something to hear. A little unsettling, perhaps, but musical in a way no instrument could ever be."

Eries looked at him and smiled, the expression reaching her eyes and warming them. He hadn't quite been able to get her to laugh, but this was close. "It sounds infinitely better than the occasional frozen salt spray we get in Palas," she said, and though it had hardly been the most formal of invitations, Folken considered her words as good an acceptance as any.

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><p>AN: The last in my recent bout of ficlets, and the only Escaflowne one, to boot! I had been missing these two, and am glad I got at least one excuse to write them when I went fishing for prompts a couple weeks ago. XP

Thanks for reading!

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